

1578/5773

C. Holton

D.D.

J. J. Lates A.B.

Dec. 19. 1790.



DISCOURSE

O N

SPIRITUAL IMPROVEMENT

F R O M

A F F L I C T I O N .



DISCOURSE
ON
SPIRITUAL IMPROVEMENT
FROM
AFFLICTION.

THE FOURTH EDITION.



WALSALL:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR, BY F. MILWARD,

M DCC XC.

DISCOURSE

SPIRITUAL IMPROVEMENT

FROM

THE REV. J. W. ALLEN

THE FOURTH EDITION





T O
The RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE
EARL of MOUNTRATH,
—FROM WHOM THE AUTHOR HAS
EXPERIENCED THE MOST GENEROUS
KINDNESS, AND THE TENDEREST HU-
MANITY IN HIS *AFFLICTED STATE*,—
THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSE,
IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED
B Y
HIS LORDSHIP'S
MOST OBLIGED,
MOST GRATEFUL
A N D
MOST DUTIFUL
HUMBLE SERVANT,
JOHN DARWALL.



THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

BARON DE MONTMANT

TO WHOM THE HONOURABLE

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF

COMMONS AND THE HOUSE OF

PEERS HAVE BEEN PRESENTED

THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT

OF THE RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE

OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

IN THE YEAR 1790

AND OF THE HOUSE OF PEERS

IN THE YEAR 1791

AND OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

IN THE YEAR 1792

AND OF THE HOUSE OF PEERS

IN THE YEAR 1793



DISCOURSE.

2 COR. iv. 16, 17.

*FOR which Cause we faint not : but though
our outward Man perish ; yet the inward
Man is renewed Day by Day :*

*For our light Affliction, which is but for a
Moment, worketh for us a far more exceed-
ing and eternal Weight of Glory.*

SAINTE Paul having before inspired the
faithful with the certain Hope of a
blessed Resurrection to eternal Life, urges
this, together with the other Considerations

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in

in the Text, as their Comfort and Support under all the Trials and Difficulties of their Christian Warfare.

From these Words let us take Occasion to consider——

F I R S T—The great Duty of Christian Perseverance :

SECONDLY—The *Improvement we ought to make under the chastening Hand of God, and the Frailties of Mortality* : and

THIRDLY—The Reward which will so infinitely *preponderate* all our *Sufferings*,—The *grand Reward* of an eternal *Weight* of Glory.

First, respecting the great Duty of *Chris-*
tian

tian Perseverance :—" For which Cause we
 " *faint not.*"

Were we all to die like the Beasts that perish, and be doomed to an everlasting Oblivion, how sad and melancholy would be the Prospect,—how *dark* and *gloomy* would be our Passage to the Grave ! But since Christ has brought *Life* and *Immortality* to *Light* through the Gospel, and has given us a Promise and Assurance of *our* Resurrection, and of his Power to effect it, in that he hath raised himself from the dead ; and will by his *Almighty Power* not only raise us up at the last Day, but by his *all-sufficient Merits* reward our Christian Labours, which we are graciously promised,—if *sincere*,—*poor* and *imperfect* as they are, shall not be in vain in the Lord ; what an Encouragement is this to us not to

be *weary* in *well-doing*, since in due Time we shall reap, if we *faint not* ! It is our reasonable Duty and Service that we should press forward towards the Prize of the High-Calling, which is in Christ Jesus, if we ever mean to obtain it. If we would form any rational Hopes of Salvation, we must *persevere unto the End*.—How many, who have once known the Way of Righteousness,—(the Tenor of whose Lives has before been orderly and Christian-like) have, towards the Conclusion of their Days, “ looked back “ from the Plough,—forsaken their first “ Love,”—given Way, perhaps, more to the *Sins of Age* than to the *Sins of Youth* ; such as *inordinate Anger*,—*an insatiable Desire after the Things of this Life*,—*intemperate Drinking*, and the like ; (Sins, which, unless particularly guarded against, too naturally grow upon

upon those of advanced Years, who in the Close of Life ought more especially to *grow* in Grace) and have at last, through the Lusts of the Flesh or the Wiles of Satan, been unwarily betrayed into everlasting Destruction ! How careful then ought we to be of *departing* from the living God ! since if we are not *faithful unto Death*, we shall unhappily forfeit his Favour, and *lose the Crown of Life*.——“ In the midst of Life we are in Death ;”—A thousand fatal Accidents, or deadly Diseases, may *overtake* us, when we are *wandering with unhallowed Steps* from Religion's *sacred Paths*,—from the *right Way* that leadeth unto *everlasting Life* into the devious Paths of Vice that lead to *eternal Death* ; which may cut us off in the midst of our Sins, and consign us to Regions of
endless

endless Misery and Woe. And, if in the *midst of Life*,—in the *Vigour of Health and Strength*,—*Continuance and Perseverance in Well-doing* be so *requisite* for the *Security* of our *Salvation* through Christ ; *Christian Diligence* becomes our more *immediate Duty* under the *Pressure of Sickness, and Infirmities of Age* : which brings us to the SECOND PARTICULAR contained in the Text ;
 “ *but though our outward Man perish, yet*
 “ *the inward Man is renewed Day by Day* :—
 This ought at least always to be the Case, though it too rarely proves so. Let us then consider the Improvement we ought to make under the chastening Hand of God, and the Frailties of Mortality.

God is not willing that any should *perish*,
 but

but that all should come to Repentance. For this gracious End he is pleased to correct us : and his Corrections are Tokens of his *Love* : for whom the Lord *loveth* he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth. And though we have been sinful Creatures, and deserving Objects of his *Hatred* ;—though we have been disobedient and rebellious, nor hearkened to the Voice of his Word ; yet if we are brought by Afflictions to learn his Statutes ; he will, for Christ's Sake, remember our Sins and Iniquities no more ; but will tenderly receive his *returning Children* to the Arms of his *paternal Love*.—How great is his Mercy towards us that he does not suffer us to perish in our Sins ! but as our Spiritual Physician administers the Cup of Affliction

to

to our sick and dying Souls ;—which, though *bitter* and *depressing* to the *outward Man*, is nevertheless *sweet* and *salutary* to the *inward* :—for though our *outward Man* *perish*, yet the *inward Man* is renewed *Day by Day* : and how much better is it that our *outward Man* *perish* than that the *whole Man*, both Soul and Body should *perish everlastingly* !—Nay, were every *Hour* and *Minute* of our Lives filled up with distracting Pain and Heart-felt Sickness,—or were we to be severely tried in the hottest Furnace of Affliction till Time should be no more,—or even to suffer the greatest Tortures the utmost Cruelty of Man could invent for the tedious Space of Hundreds and Thousands of Years, without Intermision or Alleviation ;—how much more *fearful a*
Thing

Thing would it be *finally* to *fall into the Hands of the living God* !—how infinitely more *dreadful* to be cast into Hell, and to suffer the Vengeance of eternal Fire !—Such must be the wretched and deplorable Condition of those, who do not live and die in the Lord :—of those who do not put off the old Man, and put on the new ; and, when the outward Man is perishing, do not become regenerate and renewed in the Spirit of their Minds.

And this, indeed, ought to be our constant Endeavour, by the Grace of God, since our outward Man, Alas ! is *daily perishing* :—St. Paul truly says, *We die daily*. And as we *daily sin*, it is our Duty *daily to repent*, and to be renewed Day by Day in the inward Man. If we reflect on the

Frailties of Mortality ;—how constantly our mortal Bodies are subject to Decay, and tending to Diffolution ;—how our Time is continually upon the Wing and fleeting away ;—how we are hastening every Breath we draw still nearer and nearer to the Grave,—still nearer Heaven or Hell,—to a *happy*, or a *miserable Eternity* ; we must be forcibly convinced of the great Necessity of a holy Life,—of our unremitting Attention to the infinite Concerns of our Souls, and our daily Improvement and *Growth in Grace*, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—The *inward* Man must be renewed Day by Day. All our *outward* Forms of Godliness, and religious Performances will avail us nothing *without the Religion of the Heart*. If we have
not

not so *learned* Christ, we are, as to any happy Effect, quite *ignorant* of him : and if we *love* not the Lord Jesus Christ *in Sincerity* ; but, at the same Time that we profess to *know* and *love him*,—refuse to keep his Commandments,—act in direct Opposition to the Precepts of his Gospel,—nor shew the *Genuineness* of our *Faith* by the *Goodness* of our *Works* ;—when we are summoned to appear before his dread Tribunal, how shall we stand amazed and confounded to find our Ignorance of Christ, and Want of Love to him, turn to our own Destruction, and occasion that direful Condemnation from the Mouth of the tremendous Judge eternal ; “ Inasmuch as ye have
 “ neither *known me*,—*loved me*,—nor *obeyed*
 “ *me*,—I profess, I *know you not*,—depart
 “ from me, ye Workers of Iniquity ! ”

What a miserable Deception do thousands put upon themselves in depending upon the Works of the *outward Man* ! How great and deplorable will be their Disappointment at the Day of Judgment !—how will they stand abashed with drooping Heads before the Bar of God to find, that these *dead* Works will never gain them Admittance into the Kingdom of Heaven ;—that their *superficial Form* of Godliness,—their *unsubstantial* Righteousness, and *Shadow* of Religion,—proves too *light* in the *Balance* ;—of no *Weight* in the *Scales* of divine Justice ;—and, as they themselves are *dead*—in Trespases and Sins ;—that they must for ever depart from the Presence of the *living God*,—who is not the God of the *dead* but of the *living* !—— We may frequent the Lord's House

House upon his holy Day, and at the same Time be far from hallowing his Sabbaths ; —the lifting up of *our Hands* without *our Hearts*—cannot be worshipping him in *Spirit* and in *Truth*. The *Knee* may bow before him, while there is no *Prostration* of the *Heart*. Some, indeed, are so far from prostrating the *Heart*, that they do not *bend* the *Knee* :—the *proud Pharisee* stood and prayed : --- (excepting Cases of Inconvenience or Inability) God forbid that any one's *Pride of Heart* should make them above kneeling in Supplication before the Lord, their Maker ! —Others there are, who *ind devoutly sit* and *pray* :---but this is neither to worship God *aright* with the *outward* nor the *inward Man*.— When our Devotion, (or rather our *Form of Devotion*) in the House of God,

God, and *in his awful Presence* ;) --“ for
 “ surely the Lord is in this Place ”) is
 mixed with *indecent Whisperings*,---*offensive*
Talking,---and *ridiculous Demeanour*,---can
 this be a *reasonable Service* ? Not very
reasonable,---nor very *pious*. This is
 paying the *Devil* a Part of that Worship,
 which is due to *God alone*.---When our
 blessed Lord stood upon a *Pinnacle* of the
 Temple, and had an offer made him by the
Prince of Darkness of all the Kingdoms of
 the World, and the Glory of them, if he
 would fall down and Worship him ; he re-
 plied with a Dignity peculiar to his divine
 Person ;---Get thee behind me, Satan !---
 thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and
 him only shalt thou serve :---and when the
outward Worshipper is thinking of the Plea-
 sures

fures and Vanities,---the Acquests and Glories of the World ;---happy would it be for him, if he would repulse the Attacks of the Tempter in fimilar Words to his Saviour's ; ---Get thee behind me, Satan ! I will *worship the Lord my God, and him only* will I *serve.*

We may repeat a Form of Prayer in our Families, or in our Closets, as well as in the Church,---without worshipping our Maker, or becoming Objects of his Favour :---*mere oral Petitions* can never redound to *his Honour, or our own Benefit* :---it must be the *Heart-felt Prayer* alone, that can *pierce* the Skies, and *reach* the Throne of Grace. The Prayer of the *outward Man* will not be heard.

We may go to the Lord's Table, and
partake

partake of the consecrated Elements of Bread and Wine---without the strenghtening and refreshing of our Souls by the Body and Blood of Christ.——

Our Church declares in her Twenty-ninth Article ;---“ The wicked, and such as be
 “ void of a lively Faith, although they do
 “ carnally and visibly press with their Teeth
 “ (as St. Augustine faith.) the Sacrament
 “ of the Body and Blood of Christ ; yet in
 “ no wise are they Partakers of Christ ; but
 “ rather to their Condemnation, do eat and
 “ drink the Sign or Sacrament of so great
 “ a Thing.”——And thus every other
 Christian Duty, that is not *done* from a
Christian Principle, but only *to be seen of*
Men, can never be said to be *well-done*.——
An unfeigned Love to God,---a genuine Faith

in the Redeemer, and a firm Reliance upon the Spirit of Grace,—can alone constitute the Goodness of every religious Action.—Works done antecedently to Faith in Christ only for the Sake of external Appearances, and in conformity to the Fashion of the World, cannot be pleasing to God.—Such *only* are the Works of the *outward Man* : nor can the *Doer* of them, who stands in Judgment before the *great Searcher of Hearts*, expect to hear that approving Sentence pronounced to him, that will be pronounced to every *Well-doer*, and *true Believer* ;—“ *Well-done,*
“ *thou good, and faithful Servant, enter thou*
“ *into the Joy of thy Lord !* ”

Let us now proceed to the last Part of the Text ;—*For our light Affliction, which*

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is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.

————How *light* is the *heaviest Load* of Affliction, how *short* the *longest Time* of it's Continuance, if compared with the *Weight* of Glory, and the *Infinity* of the Reward, which will succeed it !—A Reward so *weighty* as infinitely to *preponderate* all our Sufferings :—The Sufferings of this present Time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed in us. And, what, though we are a *little chastised*, if we are to be *greatly rewarded* ?—Were it not, indeed, for *the Goodness of God*, through the *Merits* of our *suffering Saviour*, we could have expected *nothing but Chastisement without any Reward* :—poor *sinful Creatures* as we are, had we offered up ourselves as Vic-

tims

tims upon the high Altar of the Cross, and voluntarily poured forth the whole Fountain of our Blood from every Vein of the Heart ; could we have supposed these *bloody sufferings* would have been accepted as a Propitiation for our Sins ?—No !—*only* the *Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all Sin* :—none but the *immaculate Lamb of God* can *take away the Sins of the World*.—And since all our Sufferings could not expiate our Sins ; where is our Merit to claim the grand Reward of an eternal Weight of Glory ?—Christ hath satisfied the Demands of the Law by his sinless Obedience ;—and we, —through the unmerited Clemency, and infinite Goodness of God,—receive the Reward. But though our Salvation is wholly the Gift of God through Jesus Christ ;—

we are nevertheless required to work it out with Fear and Trembling.—So that all our *Sufferings*,--and all our *Works*--are *only* accepted through the *atoning Sacrifice* of the *Cross*,—and the *great Work* of *Salvation* wrought for us by the *merciful Redeemer* of *Mankind*. We must look up then to the *bleeding Saviour* for the Acceptance of our *Sufferings*,—and to Christ, our *Righteousness*, for the *Recompence* of *Reward*.—Why then should we *repine* at *Sufferings*, since, through Christ, they will so much conduce to our unspeakable Benefit? For our *light Affliction*, which is but for a *Moment*, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal *Weight of Glory*:—why then should we *repine*, indeed, and charge God foolishly? Every *grateful Heart* will rather *bless* and *praise* the Lord for his

Goodness.

*Goodness. The Sufferings of this mortal Life how short !—the Miseries of eternal Death how long !—*and if it please the merciful and gracious Lord by means of temporal Sufferings to free us from eternal Torments, our Hearts can never be too thankful.—“ ’Tis “ good for me,” says holy David, “ that I “ have been afflicted :”—’tis good for every one frequently to have their corrupt Affections purged from their Dross in the Furnace of Affliction, even as the Silver, which from the Earth is tried and purified seven Times in the Fire.—The blessed Captain of our Salvation himself was made perfect through Sufferings. What a long and painful Warfare did he undergo !—From the ignominious Manger to the bloody Cross—his spotless Life was one continued Scene of
Sufferings

Sufferings :—well might he be stiled a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief.

Soon as the Saviour of the World was born,—as a Prefage of the Hardships and Sufferings that awaited his future Life,—he was deprived of the ordinary Accommodations of the Inn at Bethlehem, and wanted, —what the meanest Infant did not want,—the Convenience of a Cradle.—In his Infant State he was driven with his Parents into Egypt to secrete him from the murderous Cruelty of the blood-thirsty Herod, who sought his innocent Life.—Upon the Commencement of Youth, he was employed in the laborious Occupation of a Carpenter.—In his maturer Years, when he entered upon his grand ministerial Office, and began to publish

publish the glad Tidings of Salvation to the wretched Sons of Men,---with what little Joy did they receive those acceptable Tidings !---with what great Indignity did they treat their Lord and Saviour !---When he went about doing good to the Souls and Bodies of Men,--casting out Devils,--forgiving the Sins of supplicating Penitents ;---making the blind to see,--the lame to walk, --the deaf to hear,--and the dumb to speak, --restoring the sick to Health, and the dead to Life ;--all the Return made him by an ungrateful World was---Derision and Blasphemy,---Persecution and Death. He was made the Scorn of Men, and the outcast of the People ;--charged with casting out Devils through Beelzebub the Chief of the Devils ;--persecuted from City to City,---
nor

nor had the Son of Man where to lay his
 Head : and at last,--(after a Life of Pover-
 ty and Distress,--of Labour and Sorrow ;---
 after his Heart-rending Passion in the Gar-
 den) (evidenced by his sanguine Sweat
 distilling from his sacred Brows, and falling
 down to the Ground)---to complete his
 transcendent Miseries,--(“ for never was
 “ Sorrow like unto his Sorrow ”)--after
 fainting under the oppressive Load of his
 Cross, (though at the same Time he sus-
 tained the onerous Guilt of a whole World)
 ---wearing a lacerating Crown of Thorns
 he is conducted to the Top of the execra-
 ble Calvary :---the horrid Instrument of his
 Execution is laid on the Ground to receive
 him :--the submissive Redeemer reclines upon
 that “ Bed of Sorrows : ”---they nail him to
 the

the cruel Cross : fix it erect in the Earth :
 —the *blessed Jesus* hangs—supported by the
 torturing Nails—on the *accursed Tree*—all
 covered with his precious Blood—in Agony
 too great for Tongue to tell. And, after
 three Hours bloody Conflict, infinitely more
 trying than Humanity ever experienced ;—
 affecting *Wonder to relate* !—THE LORD OF
 LIFE EXPIRES.—The *needle's Spear* is
 plunged into his *commiserating Heart*, which
 had just been *bleeding it's last Drop for a*
lost World.---Oh ! ye holy Martyrs ! well
 might ye suffer for your Saviour, who had
 suffered so much for You.—What were all
 your Fires, and Racks, and Tortures,—com-
 pared with God's fiery Indignation against
 Sinners, and the excruciating Agonies of the
 Cross, inflicted upon the Holy Jesus for the

Iniquities of us all ?—And, Oh ! all ye Sons and Daughters of Affliction, how patiently ought ye to bear the Cross after your suffering Redeemer !—When you lie sadly languishing upon the Bed of Sickness and Death ;—remember, that your Sorrows are not so numerous as your Sins.—Do not presume to rank yourselves with your sinless Saviour, and to think, that you have done nothing amiss ;—but confess, as ye ought, with the penitent Thief, that your Sufferings are the due Reward of your Deeds.—All our Sufferings here, my Christian Brethren, will soon be over :—may they be made instrumental, by the Grace of God, to our Exemption from those dreadful Sufferings, that shall never have an End ! and may we not only bear them with Christian

Resignation

Resignation, but thankfully kiss the gracious Hand that inflicts them !——And when the Body can no longer sustain its Load of Sufferings ;—may the Lord support our *Souls* in the *Hour of Death*,—that they *faint not* ;—and grant, that though our *outward Man* *perish*,—yet that the *inward Man* may be found to have been *renewed Day by Day* ;—and, finally, *that our light Affliction, which has been but for a Moment, may work for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory !*

All which may the gracious and eternal God mercifully grant through the MERITORIOUS SUFFERINGS of our HOLY and ADORABLE REDEEMER ! AMEN.

F I N I S.

Reignation, but thankfully kiss the grac-
 ious Hand that inflicts them!—And when
 the Body can no longer sustain its load of
 sufferings;—may the Lord support our souls
 in the Hour of Death;—that they may not;
 —and grant that through our own and Man-
 sy's;—yet that the reward shall may be
 found to have been reserved Day by Day;—
 and finally, that our light sufferings, which
 has been but for a Moment, may turn yet in
 a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of
 Glory!—
 All which may the glorious and eternal
 God mercifully grant through the MERE-
 TORIOUS SUFFERINGS of our HOLY
 and ADORABLE REDEEMER, AMEN.



